THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

(d) Interest of employees and safety are paramount considerations in all planning and development exercises in Railways.

Unutilised Railway land

†2069. SHRI SAMAN PATHAK: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Railways have any proposal for giving its unutilized land for new schemes and development on the request of State Governments;

(b) the area of unutilized land falling in the State of West Bengal; and

(c) whether Government have any proposal for giving the land on lease to those families who are residing on unutilized land?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) No. Sir. However, on the request of the State Government for lease of Railway land, the same may be considered on case to case basis when the land is spareable. The priority purposes for such leasing may be related to passenger utility, ROB/RUB construction.

(d) Railway's do not maintain state-wise data. However, zone-wise unutilized land in West Bengal is as under:

Railway	Area (in Hectare)
Eastern	396
North-East Frontier	990
South-Wastern	1417.8

(c) No, Sir.

Rail projects of Tamil Nadu

2070. SHRI S. ANBALAGAN: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) the new development projects announced for the State of Tamil Nadu;

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) the amount earmarked for the projects for the year 2007-08 and time by which the projects are likely to be completed;

(c) the details of the pending development railway projects in the State, and the reasons for the delay in starting/completion of these projects alongwith the details of costs overrun, if any; and

(d) the position of gauge conversion projects in the State alongwith the reasons for delay in implementation of the projects?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI R. VELU): (a) Gauge conversion of Mayiladuturai-Karaikudi & Tiruturaipundi-Agastiyampalli Metre Gauge line and electrification of Tiruchchirappalli-Madurai section have been included in the Budget 2007-08.

(b) An outlay of Rs. 40.25 crore has been provided for the above projects during 2007-08. No target date for completion of these projects is fixed.

(c) and (d) 04 New Line, 09 Gauge Conversion, 07 Doubling, 02 Railway Electrification and 02 Metropolitan Transport Projects falling fully/partly in the State of Tamil Nadu are in progress. These projects are being progressed as per the availability of resources, keeping in view their operational priority and other considerations.

Railways have a huge throwforward of ongoing projects with limited availability of resources, as a result of which the projects take long time in completion. This results into increase in cost of projects due to escalation and other reasons including change in standards of construction and technology, scope of the work and conditions of the area etc. during the intervening period. In the absence of assured matching funds at the time of taking up of a project, there is an increase in cost in almost every project due to reasons enumerated above.

During 2006-07, 148 Kms. of gauge conversions have been completed and 191 Kms gauge conversion is in advance stage of completion. During 2007-08, 357 Kms of gauge conversion is targeted for completion including some of the spill over sections.